



Massachusetts Department of Education | Massachusetts

SUMMARY

The aMAzing educators' initiative is an aligned, systemic approach to performance-based compensation (PBC) designed to support and strengthen instruction in turnaround schools in one of the Commonwealth's urban districts, Springfield Public Schools. Low-performing schools, designated as Level 4 by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (ESE) in the Springfield public school district, are participating. All participating schools have large populations of students with high poverty, high transience, limited English proficiency, and special needs.

PROGRAM GOALS AND EVALUATION

The program measures student learning gains as an indicator of teacher effectiveness, and, schoolwide, is an indicator of a principal's effectiveness. The program seeks to improve student achievement in the targeted schools by improving teacher and principal effectiveness using PBC that links to new roles and responsibilities for teachers and incentives for more effective recruitment and retention. Project objectives are: 95 percent of stakeholders will be able to accurately explain traits and qualities of effective educators; evaluations will use a performance-based evaluation system that complies with Massachusetts 603 CMR; all educators will develop goals and receive targeted professional development (PD); 90 percent of schools will employ effective educators; 90 percent will identify, reward, and retain effective teachers; and TIF districts will complete a sustainability plan. An independent external evaluator is conducting project evaluation.

REWARD STRUCTURE

In order to receive TIF incentives, individuals must meet their Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). The SLOs were measured from baseline data to end-of-year performance data. Educators' SLOs needed to tie to the particular

State: Massachusetts

Location: Springfield, Massachusetts

Award amount (estimate): \$17,608,365

TIF Cohort: 3

STEM Grantee: No

Number of districts participating: 1

Number of schools participating: 10

Number of teachers eligible: 693

Number of principals eligible: 10

Superintendent: N/A

Key program staff:

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students they served. The three most important factors in the process include:

- Defining the metric (grade level served and content area);
- Defining the cohort of students;
- Defining the target.

If an educator was deemed to have made "Some Progress," defined as meeting 30 percent or more of the target outlined in the SLOs, then the educator was eligible for a payout of 5 percent of base pay. Only those teachers who

met the SLO goal were eligible for an additional bonus of up to 5 percent of base pay if the school met some or all of its five measureable annual goals. There are several outcomes of this revised TIF payment structure:

- Developing SLOs for individual educators provided the foundation for developing measures of student growth and learning required by the state's Educator Evaluation Framework and Springfield's Educator Evaluation System. Because of the federal requirements and Springfield's response to the TIF requirements, this supported and pushed the work in educator evaluation.
- Focusing first on individual educators and the extent to which they met targets for their students (rather than using schoolwide measures alone) reinforced the message of the importance of individual educators in making a difference with students.

YEARS 1-4 HIGHLIGHTS

- Established a collaborative relationship with Springfield teachers' union
- Worked closely with ESE to highlight use of district-determined measures in advance of the Commonwealth's regulatory requirements
- Reallocated personnel savings of \$150,000 in Years 2 and 3 to support the project
- Participated in a monitoring visit that ED project staff conducted
- Made effectiveness incentive payouts to 99 percent of eligible teachers in 2012
- Will continue to offer PD opportunities to Level 4 schools
- Tracked education perceptions of SLO-based awards for aMAzing educators after the grantee made them.

YEAR 5 OUTLOOK

The district is about 80 percent complete in developing a sustainability plan entering Year 5 of the grant. One example of the district's focus on sustainability is the creation of the Effective Educator Coach position—a project originally seeded by TIF grant funds and now funded through the district. The EEC program provides an additional career

ladder position offered within every school in the district. The district needs to decide which other programs and practices to sustain. The district and union will agree on issues that must be resolved and will address the issues regarding sustainability.

SUSTAINABILITY

Springfield has allocated general funds to pay the EEC stipends ongoing with complete support from the teacher union leadership. Moving forward, SPS will use the train-the-trainer model and the district's experienced EECs to lead the PD of the new Effective Educator Coaches hired by the district.

TIF-funded PD being sustained with district general funds includes the work that New Frontier 21's founder, Dr. Anthony Muhammad, began by working with the entire staff at the Zanetti Montessori School. Dr. Muhammad's work on creating Healthy School Culture was so impactful that the district contracted to bring him back on two subsequent dates when he worked with Central Office administrators and elementary and secondary school principals.

PERFORMANCE-BASED COMPENSATION

- Adjusting the cohort assignment for special education paraprofessionals to be based on just the schools to which the educator was assigned (rather than using a school-wide calculation).
- In 2012–13, Springfield adjusted SLOs for each grade and subject based on statewide average performance. Educators said that this caused the SLOs to be overly ambitious; the district eliminated this adjustment in 2013–14.
- Principals confirmed student assignments for eligible staff in their schools to help ensure accuracy in the student cohort to whom the educator was assigned (previously, the cohort for each educator was based on SPS's enrollment database).
- Springfield paid out stipends to Effective Educator Coaches and to White Street school teachers who participated in the Research for Better Teaching Professionals, totaling \$1,661,550.37.